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SUBJECT: TAMIL EXPATRIATES CALL FOR RESETTLEMENT OF IDPS

REF: A. APRIL 7 AND 8 LONDON DAILY REPORTS (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. APRIL 28 AND 30 LONDON DAILY REPORTS (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (SBU/NF) Summary. In an October 21 meeting with four UK citizen Tamils from "Expatriate Tamils," a UK-based diaspora advocacy group, requested that the USG "prevail upon the Sri Lankan government" to allow for timely resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including 250,000 plus being "illegally" held in government camps. The representatives cited numerous human rights violations in these camps and noted that with the approaching monsoon season, a humanitarian aid crisis is looming. They opposed calls for reconciliation before the issue of resettlement is resolved. They further noted that since the end of violence in May, expatriates are being prevented from returning to Sri Lanka and are unable to render assistance to family members. End Summary.

The Tamil Expat View

[1](#)2. (SBU/NF) During an October 21 meeting with Poloff, four UK citizen Tamils from "Expatriate Tamils," a UK-based diaspora advocacy group, outlined a number of concerns regarding human rights violations in Sri Lanka. While many occurred during the final weeks of the Sri Lankan military campaign, others have occurred more recently in IDP camps, they said. They noted that conditions in these camps, which hold over 250,000 people, are in breach of international law and UN agreements. They claimed that aid agencies have been prevented from performing their work and that media are not allowed into the region without government accompaniment. They asserted that the Sri Lankan government has restricted Tamil expatriates from returning to the region and prevented them from rendering assistance or locating family members, adding that there is no freedom of movement between camps, and that families have been separated without means of communication. The representatives also suggested that as many as 11,000 persons have disappeared since being interned in the camps. The representatives stressed that if resettlement does not occur within weeks, not months, the monsoon season will bring humanitarian disaster to the make-shift camps. Representatives were

also concerned that calls by the international community for political reconciliation drew attention away from addressing the relocation of IDPs. They argued that the only way reconciliation would occur was after the relocation issue had been settled. The representatives requested that the USG "prevail upon the Sri Lankan government" to allow for timely resettlement of IDPs, including nearly 250,000 plus being "illegally" held in camps. They argued that this issue will only be resolved with US leadership.

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Sri Lankan UK Profile

13. (SBU) 2001 census data show nearly 70,000 Sri Lanka-born people live in the UK, while the Tamil community puts that number at closer to 200,000. UK Tamil diaspora groups vary in size and purpose but are active participants in the political process, presenting their case to HMG and Parliament and initiating sit-ins and protests at major junctures. At the height of the fighting in April, Tamil groups conducted large protests for two weeks, which disrupted traffic and resulted in numerous arrests (Ref A).

HMG's View

14. (SBU) In an October 13 statement to the House of Commons, Foreign Secretary David Miliband outlined HMG's position, focusing on three areas: "Urge the (Sri Lankan) government to improve conditions for IDPs; call for the strengthening of the rule of law and address human rights concerns; and encourage urgent action on setting out a political process to address the grievances of minorities." UK policy has consistently maintained that in order for lasting peace to prevail in Sri Lanka a political settlement must be achieved which takes into account the grievances of the Tamil minority. FM Miliband has been outspoken regarding the subject and has made numerous references to the region in his press briefings. He responded quickly to the diaspora outcry in April and made a high-profile visit to the region shortly thereafter (Ref B).

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